

TALMAGE'S SERMON.

The One Preached Just Before the Fire

ON THE REAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

"Behold Thou Art Fair My Love," the Title of His Subject.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., May 13, 1894.—The tabernacle was crowded to the doors to-day when Rev. Dr. Talmage took for the subject of his forenoon sermon a passage of scripture which has been made the subject of much discussion and various interpretation by modern theologians. His theme was, "A Cheerful Church," and the text was selected from Solomon's song 4:1: "Behold Thou Art Fair, My Love."

"Higher criticism" says that this book of Solomon's Song is a love scene, a forlorn maiden sighing for her beau. If so, it is an unclean and debauched utterance inserted in the pure word of God and is not fit for common reading. My opinion is that it is an inspired ode setting forth the feeling of Christ toward the church and of the church toward Christ. Christ is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride. The same words we can utter to-day truthfully whether in regard to the church of God in general or this church in particular: "Behold, thou art fair, my love." The past week has been one of prolonged congratulation for that we have for twenty-five years been permitted to associate with each other in the relation of pastor and people. When I came to Brooklyn I found a small band of Christian disciples who from various causes had become less and less, until they stood upon the very verge of extinction as a church; and the question was being agitated from time to time whether it would be possible to maintain a church life longer. Indeed, had not those men and women been consecrated and earnest, they would have surrendered to the adverse circumstances. They marshaled a congregational meeting, and, gathering up all the forces possible, they cast nineteen votes for a pastor, all of which I am happy to have received.

It was not through any spirit of personal courage or reckless adventure that led me, from one of the warmest and most congenial pastorates in Philadelphia that a man ever enjoyed, to this then most uninviting field; but it was the feeling that God had called me to the work and I was sure he would see me through.

I have thought that it might be profitable to us to state briefly what kind of a church we have been trying to establish.

In the first place, I remark that we have been trying to build here a Christian church—distinctively such; in other words, a church where we should preach the Lord Jesus Christ and him crucified. My theology is all gone into five letters—Jesus, Jesus, the foundation for all structures. Jesus, the balm for all wounds. Jesus, the eye-salve for all blindness. Jesus, the guide through all perplexities. Jesus, the hope for all discouragements. Jesus, the reform for all wrongs. I have faith to believe that there is more power in one drop of the blood of Jesus Christ to cure the woes of the world than in an ocean full of human quackery. Jesus is the grandest note in any minstrelsy. He is the brightest gem in any crown. Height overstepping all height. The center of every circumference. The circumference to every center. The pacifier of all turbulence. The umpire of all disputes. Jesus! Jesus! At his table all nations are to sit. Around his throne all worlds are to revolve. He is to be the irradiation of the universe. Jesus! Jesus! It is that truth that we have tried to preach in this tabernacle.

Do you ask more minutely what we believe? I can tell you. We have no dry, withered, juiceless theology. We believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, the deliverer of the distressed, the home for the homeless, the friend for the friendless. We believe in Jesus Christ, able to save to the uttermost, pardoning the guilty, imputing his righteousness to the believer. We believe in the Holy Ghost, the comforter, the Sanctifier, cheering up the heart in life's ills, and kindling bright lights in every dark landing place. We believe that the whole race is so sunken in sin that nothing but the omnipotent arm of God can ever lift it out. We believe in grace—free grace, sovereign grace, triumphant grace, eternal grace. We believe in a Bible—authentic in its statements, immaculate in its teachings, glorious in its promises. We believe in heaven, the abode of the righteous; and in hell, the residence of those who are soul-suicides—of their own free choice refusing the divine mercy. We believe in the salvation of all men who accept Christ by faith, be they sprinkled or immersed, worship they in cathedral or in log cabin, believe they in Presbyterianism or Episcopacy, dwell they under Italian skies or in Siberian snow-storms, be they Ethiopian or American. All one in Christ. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, on the way to one heaven. We built this tabernacle for the purpose of setting forth these great theories of the Gospel of the Son of God. Would that we had been more faithful in the pulpit! Would that we had been more faithful in the pew!

I remark, further, that we have tried here to build a church distinctively unconventional. Instead of asking, as some people are disposed to do, how other people do it, we have asked the question how people do not do it. Imperious custom has decided that churches shall be angular, cheerless, gloomy, unsympathetic; forgetting that what men call a pious

gloom is impious, and that that church has the best architecture where the people are the most comfortable, and that that is the most efficient Christian service where the people are made most sick of sin and most anxious after Christ and heaven; And so we called the architects together for our first church building, and said, "Give us an amphitheatre"—that is, a large family circle, gathered around a fireplace. For many years we had felt that an amphitheatre was the only proper shape for an audience room. The prominent architects of the country said, "It can not be done. You need a churchly building." And so we had plan after plan of churchly buildings presented; but in due time God sent a man who grasped our idea and executed it. So far from being a failure, it satisfied our want, and all our three churches were built on the amphitheatrical plan, and scores of churches all over the country have adopted the same plan.

And, my brethren and sisters, we fall in our work just in proportion as we try to be like other churches. We believe that God intended every church, like every man, to be individual, gathering up all its peculiarities and idiosyncracies, and hurling them all toward some good and grand object. In other words, no two churches ought ever to be just alike. Here is a church, for instance, whose object is to prepare philosophers and artists and critics for heaven. God speed them in the difficult work! Here is a church, on the other hand, that proposes to bring only the poor into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, looking not after the rich. God speed such a church in its undertaking! But there is a larger idea that a church may take—bringing in the rich and the poor, the wise and the ignorant, the high and the low; so that kneeling beside each other shall be the man faring sumptuously every day, and the man who could not get his breakfast. God speed such a church!

Oh! my friends, we need to break away from slavery to ecclesiastical custom. We dare not sing if anybody hears us. We dare not preach unless we have rounded off our sentences to suit the criticism of the world. We dare not dress for church until we have examined the fashion plates, and would rather stay at home than appear with a coat or a hat not sanctioned by custom. When will the day of deliverance come to the church of God, when, instead of a dead religion, laid out in a catalogue of insincerity, we shall have a living, bounding, sympathetic, glowing Christianity?

I remark, further, that we have tried here to build and to conduct a cheerful church. While, as you know, we have not held back the terrors of the law, and the sterner doctrines of the gospel, we have tried in this house to present to this people the idea that the gladdest, brightest, happiest thing in all the universe is the Christian religion. There is so much trouble in the world; business men have so many anxieties; toiling men have so many fatigues; orphans have so many desolations—for God's sake, if there be any bright place on earth, show it to them. Let the Church of Jesus Christ be the most cheerful spot on earth. Let me say that I do not want anybody to come whining around me about the Christian religion. I have no faith in a religion made up of equal parts of wormwood, vinegar, and red pepper. If the religion that is presented to us be a depression, we will get along better without it. If it be a joy, let it shine out from your face, and from your conversation. If a man comes to my house to talk of religion with lugubrious countenance, and manner full of sniffe and dolorousness, I feel like saying to my wife, "You had better look up the silver before he steals something." I have found it an invariable rule that men who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, priding themselves at the same time on their sanctimoniousness, always turn out badly. I never knew an exception. While those who are the most consistent, the most useful, and the most consecrated, have perfume in their conversation, and heaven in their face.

The happiest Christians that I have ever known have been persons from 60 to 80 years of age. By that time people get over the shams and pretenses of society, and have no longer any patience with anything like imposture in religion. Christians! how dare you be gloomy? Is not the God your Father? Is not Jesus Christ your Saviour? Has not your path all through life been strewn with mercies? Are you insensible to the fact that there are glories awaiting you in the better land?—doxologies of celestial worship, eternal chorals, tearless eyes, songs that resound under arches of strength, and hosannas that clap their hands at the foot of the throne? Is it nothing to you that all the hills of heaven are radiant with the faces of those who have gone up from you, and who are waiting for your coming, ready to keep you eternal holiday? Is there nothing in songs that never cease, in hearts that never ache, in splendors that never die, to make you glad? Then take no more mercy at the hand of thy God! Give back the marriage-ring of love that Jesus put on your finger in the day of your espousal! Plant no more of the flowers of heaven where there ought to be nothing but nettles and nightshade!

We try to make this church a cheerful church. A man on Saturday afternoon stands in his store and says, "How shall I meet these obligations? How can I endure this new disaster that is coming upon me?" He goes home. Sabbath morning finds him in the house of God. Through the song, through the sermon, through the prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ says to that man, "O

man! I have watched thee; I have seen all thy struggles. It is enough; I will see thee through; I will stand between thee and thy creditors. I will make up in heavenly treasures what you have lost in earthly treasures. Courage! man! courage! Angels of God, I command you to clear the track for that man; put your wings over his head; with your golden scepters strike for his defense; throw around him all the defenses of eternity!" What is the consequence? That business man is strengthened. He goes to the store next day feeling that God is with him and ready to deliver.

That same Sunday there is a poor old woman in the church hearing the Gospel. Oh! how shrunken she is! She wears the same dress she wore twenty years ago. How faded it is, and how out of date! She sits and listens as well as she can. Her eyes are so dim she can not see half-way across the church. Her ear is so imperfect that she can only catch occasionally a note of the psalm or a word of the preacher. Some one sitting next to her gives her a book and finds the place for her. She says, "Thank you, miss, thank you!" She holds the book close up to her eyes, and with a voice all full of tremors, sings:

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high;
Hide me, O, my Saviour hide,
Till the storm of life is past.
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh! receive my soul at last.

And Jesus says to her, "Mother, are you weary?" And she says, "Yes, Jesus, I am very tired." Jesus says, "Mother, are you poor?" And she says, "Yes, I am very poor. I can not sew any more; I can not knit any more. I am very poor." Jesus says to her, "Mother, would you like to rest?" She says, "Yes, Lord, that is what I want—rest." "Courage, mother," says Jesus, "I will see thee through." She goes home. The next morning, in the tenement house, some one dwelling on another floor comes to her room and knocks. No answer. The door is opened. She is dead! The night before, the chariot of God halted at that pillow of straw, and Jesus kept his promise. He said that he would give her rest, and he has given her rest. Glory be to God for the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of such Christian comfort! Oh! that we might have such joy as that which inspired the men at the battle of Leuthen. They were singing a Christian song as they went into battle. A general said to the king, "Shall I stop those people singing?" "No," said the king; "men that can sing like that can fight."

I would that we had a singing church, a joyful church, a jubilant church, a comforting church; for then we would have a triumphant church. I remark, further, that we have here tried to build a church abreast of the times. It is all folly for us to try to do things the way they did fifty or a hundred years ago. We might as well be playing with Eliza's crooked stick, or go into battle with Saul's armor, or prefer a canal boat to an express train, as to be clinging to old things. What we most need now is a wide-awake church. People who are out in the world all the week, jostling against this lightning-footed century, come into the church on the Sabbath, and go right to sleep unless they have a spirited service. Men engaged in literary callings all the week, reading pungent, sharp writings, can not be expected to come and hear our ecclesiastical humdrum. If a man stays at home on Sundays and reads the newspapers, it is because the newspapers are more interesting. We need, my brethren, to rouse up and stop hunting with blank cartridges. The Church of God ought to be the leader, the interpreter, the inspirer of the age. It is all folly for us to be discussing old issues—arraigning Nero, hanging Absalom, striking the Philistines with Shamgar's ox-goad—when all around about us are iniquities to be slain.

Did I say that the church ought to be abreast of the times? I take that back. The Church of God ought to be ahead of the times—as far in advance as the Cross of Christ is ahead of all human invention. Paul was a thousand years ahead of the day in which he lived. The swift-footed years that have passed since Luther died have not yet come up to Luther's grave. Give iniquity four thousand years the start, and the feet of Christianity are so nimble that if you will but give it full swing, it will catch up and pass it in two bounds. The Church of God ought to be ahead of the times.

Then She Was Not So Charmed.
"I'm so glad I'm going to be your wife, Mr. Jones—I mean Charley," said "the only woman he ever loved," after he had asked and been accepted. "Most of your people live in Cleveland, you know, and I have never met them. But I have met your sister who lives in Toledo several times, and like her very much."

"Why, I have no sister in Toledo or anywhere else," he said, wondering what it meant.

"Is that so?" I don't understand it at all. That charming young widow, Mrs. Van Smart, said she was your sister, and you had another one across the river."

"Oh, she was just joking you, my darling," he replied while a confused flush crept over his face.

Since then she has found that the "charming widow" was a sister by rejection, and she is not so charmed with her.—Toledo Blade.

A Utilitarian.
Daughter (pleadingly)—I am sure you will like George. He is the most conscientious young man I ever knew. Father (a business man)—Then don't you dare to marry him? You'll starve to death!

A ROYAL CIRCUS DAY.

The Third Time is the Charm For Ringlings.

A BRILLIANT SHOW ON THE STREETS.

How the Big Circus is Run—A Splendid Performance Before a Large Audience.

This being circus day, the poetry editor of the STATE JOURNAL had some thought on circuses in general and the old fashioned circus in particular, which he conveys to the STATE JOURNAL's readers in the following:

How dare to my heart is the old fashioned circus—
The first simple circus that had, but one ring,
Where sat on a board with feet dangling downward
And absorbed without worry the very last thing.

The man put his head in the mouth of the lion.
The old spotted mare cantered in at the door.
The hand always broke down, but I liked it
The old-fashioned circus that no w is no more.

Ah, thousands still live who regret its departure.
As I do when watching the new fangled sort.
With three rings, that may beat it somewhat for
But never can beat it for genuine sport.

There we sat open-mouthed and took in each feature
Distinctly and clearly, with nothing to confuse
As nowadays, while trying to watch the whole
We lay down on the new one our stock of abuse.

How vexed we feel nowadays and how disappointed.
When thinking of acts in the ring that we lost.
While watching the poor little acts in the other,
That never seem worth more than half what will cost.

And now as we sit on the soft cushioned benches,
Which compared to the old ones are not quite so rough,
We still sigh for the one-ringed, old fashioned circus,
The circus where one pair of eyes was enough.

The old fashioned boss who refused us admittance
When his boys we had worked half the day on the tent.
And made us content ourselves with a decoration;
The kind of which Hades would never have sent.

The kind-hearted cent hand who, seeing our trouble,
Let us crawl beneath the canvas at our sweet will.
The vendor with tin cup glued half full of peanuts;
And the old-fashioned concert, ah, it's with us still.

It takes an army of small boys in addition to about 300 men to get ready for a single performance the tents and other properties of a circus the size of Ringling Brothers.

Five of the seven Ringling brothers are in town today with their show, and an immense show it is. They came to Topeka Sunday morning over the Union Pacific from Leavenworth and pitched their tents on the state fair grounds. The army of small boys were on hand to assist in this event of never-ceasing interest. They never fail to have an excuse for hanging around when the circus men and the police try in vain to drive them away. Those boys who were on the ground early this morning don't go to school until afternoon; and those who are there this afternoon went to school in the morning; and those who stayed all day didn't go to school at all, because they are just "getting over the measles," or because they expect their "little sis" around you, all five of 'em. They'll just jump right up out of the ground. This is the strictest show I ever was with," he continued, after borrowing a plug of tobacco and returning about 33 per cent of it. "You can't do nothing out of the way. They can't allow no grafting, and you will get fired if you look cross-eyed at a girl."

Mr. Alf T. Ringling, the third of the brothers in point of age, was finally located. He was in the ticket wagon and didn't know the reporter was around. "Say, Billy," he said, "give me some 'dough.' I want to go up town and pay a few bills." This remark was addressed to a young man who was counting out a bushel of coin.

"How much do you want?"
"Oh, I don't know. I guess eight hundred dollars will be enough." He was given the money in bills and gold, which he deposited in a satchel. He gladly showed the reporter over the whole circus from one end to the other. He is popular with all the men and knows many of them by name. The grub-tent was one of the most interesting places on the ground. Here six cooks were hard at work getting up a good dinner for the 500 men who are connected with the circus. And those who think for a minute that they don't have good things to eat are mistaken. For instance, the bill of fare this noon was: Veal cutlets breaded, with tomato sauce, beef steak, custard pies (115 of them), coffee, besides bread and butter. This was the noon meal, the lightest the men eat. The 5 o'clock dinner is the big meal.

There are seven of the Ringling brothers connected with the show, Henry and Gus, the youngest two are not members of the firm. The other brothers are as follows, arranged according to age: Alf, Otto, Alf T., Charles and John.

NORTH TOPEKA.

Items of Interest from the North Side of the River.

Mr. and Mrs. John Holcomb are the parents of a son born this morning.

Dr. Ayres came up from Grantville today to mingle with old friends and see the show.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Besean of St. Marys are visiting their daughter, Mrs. J. E. Van Laey.

L. W. Fulton of Carbondale is in the city looking after some property interests which he has here.

Mrs. H. H. Fowler and daughter and Miss Anna Henry have returned from a week's visit at Ottawa.

Ralph Wilson has secured a position as day clerk in Fred Harvey's eating house at La Junta and departed for that place Saturday night.

Miss Eva Barber, a former resident of this side, will be married tomorrow evening to Mr. Ed Davis of Auburn. The ceremony will occur at the home of the bride near that place.

The Epworth League of the Kansas avenue M. E. church, celebrated its fifth anniversary last evening. The exercises on the occasion were elaborate and appropriate, consisting of music, recitations and addresses. H. H. Fowler contributed

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held over his head. He has been unable to perform for several days because he sprained a muscle in his back, but he says he is all right now and proposes to perform today. There are many other good performers of many nationalities, and in all they form an army of 102 people.

One good feature of the circus and one that deserves cordial commendation is its freedom from that disreputable class known among themselves as "grafter," or confidence men. This class run shell-games, pick pockets and resort to similar methods for deriving revenue. They work either on wages or on a percentage of profits. It is stated not only by the Ringlings but by all the men about the place, that there isn't a single "grafter" with the show.

"Where could I find one of the Ringling brothers?" asked a reporter of one of the circus men.

"Dunno," replied the man who was taking a rest on a bale of hay. "It's harder to find any of 'em than as if there was only one. The only way I know is to do something wrong and they'll all be around you, all five of 'em. They'll just jump right up out of the ground. This is the strictest show I ever was with," he continued, after borrowing a plug of tobacco and returning about 33 per cent of it. "You can't do nothing out of the way. They can't allow no grafting, and you will get fired if you look cross-eyed at a girl."

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uted a valuable paper on "What we are Doing." Miss Dora Kirk and Miss Viola Troutman also read interesting papers. The league was organized in Cleveland, Ohio, five years ago.

Will E. Bowen took a young lady boating at the park yesterday afternoon. The boat capsized turning both occupants into the water. The water was shallow, and they reached the shore unharmed except by a thorough wetting.

The opening of a new clothing store on this side by Messrs. Hale & Evans which had been previously announced to occur on Saturday attracted much attention not only in the city but the surrounding country and the store was thronged with visitors all day, a very large number of them being customers. A large force of assistants was kept busy from morning until well into the night. As an illustration of what pluck and enterprise will do their venture is a great success. Their annual sale is still going on.

Last Saturday afternoon Miss Celestia Bedwell, daughter of Superintendent Bedwell at the North Topeka asylum and hospital, was given a very pleasant surprise party by seventeen of her little girl friends. The afternoon was spent in playing various games. The best of all for them was the supper, which consisted of ice cream, strawberries, fruits, candy and cake. Misses Mattie Dowdell and Lulu Hucklestadt assisted. Mrs. Bedwell in entertaining the little folks. Mrs. R. A. Dibble and Mrs. Gordon were present also. The following are the names of the little girls present: Carrie Ellingwood, Carrie Summers, Gracie Summers, Maggie Merritt, Mamie Merritt, Clara Rigby, Gusie Barney, Gerlie Barney, Gracie Hunter, Alice Hale, Laura Davis, Louise Nusspeck, Georgie Westbrook, Maud Booth, Clara Bragunier, Estella Bragunier.

When you need lumber give E. P. Ewart, the new dealer a call, 1012 Kansas avenue, north.

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